



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

April 11, 2005

News Release

ICE ARRESTS MS-13 GANG MEMBER WHO ROBBED COUPLE AT GUNPOINT

Convicted Felon Set for Deportation from United States

RALEIGH, N.C. – A member of the vicious street gang “Mara Salvatrucha” (MS-13) -- convicted of robbing a couple at gunpoint -- was arrested here Wednesday by agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Jose Peralta-Morales, 17, a citizen of Mexico, has been charged with being present in the United States illegally. He is in ICE custody at the Wake County Jail in Raleigh awaiting his imminent deportation.

Peralta-Morales’ arrest is the latest action under “Operation Community Shield,” an ICE anti-gang initiative that targets members of the MS-13 gang. Since Operation Community Shield’s launch in January, ICE agents have worked with their federal, state and local counterparts to arrest more than 135 MS-13 gang members nationwide.

“Under Operation Community Shield, ICE is turning up the pressure on violent criminals like Jose Peralta-Morales, and we’re sending a clear message that we won’t tolerate their criminal activities in our communities,” said Ken Smith, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Atlanta office. “We’re committed to using all of our law enforcement tools to thwart the criminal efforts of gangs like MS-13 and to protect the safety of the public by getting these gang members off of our streets.”

Operation Community Shield is a nationwide initiative designed to disrupt and dismantle violent gang organizations and prosecute their members by employing the full range of authorities and investigative tools available to ICE. Under this initiative, ICE is employing its broad immigration authorities, both criminal and administrative, against gang members. At the same time, ICE uses its customs authorities to target narcotics smuggling and money laundering and to seek the forfeiture of assets.

In addition to partnerships with domestic law enforcement entities, ICE will also be working through its 54 Attaché offices overseas to cooperate with foreign governments that are also experiencing gang problems, particularly in Central America.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.